UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTY-SECOND SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL AND
DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE
(FOURTH COMMITTEE)
2nd meeting
held on
Tuesday, 30 September 1997
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MAPURANGA (Zimbabwe)

CONTENTS

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS

OTHER MATTERS

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of the publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.4/52/SR.2
9 October 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

97-81902 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

1. Ms. MILLAR (Australia) nominated Mr. Ravjaa Mounkhou (Mongolia) and Ms. LEONCE-CARRYL (Saint Lucia) nominated Mr. Petru Dumitriu (Romania) for the two offices of Vice-Chairman.

2. Mr. Mounkhou (Mongolia) and Mr. Dumitriu (Romania) were elected Vice-Chairmen by acclamation.

3. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee would take up the election of the Rapporteur at a later meeting.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/C.4/52/1; A/C.4/52/L.1)

4. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had before it a letter dated 19 September 1997 from the President of the General Assembly containing the list of agenda items allocated to it for consideration (A/C.4/52/1) and a note by the Chairman prepared in accordance with the related decisions and practices of the General Assembly (A/C.4/52/L.1). He drew attention to the recommendations concerning the organization and rationalization of the work and practices of the General Assembly contained in the report of the General Committee (A/52/250) and to the decisions taken by the General Assembly regarding the closing date of the session, the schedule of meetings, explanations of vote, rights of reply and points of order.

5. On the question of the length of statements during general debates, he suggested that the time limit should be set at 10 minutes, with the exception of statements made by spokesmen for groups of delegations, for which the time limit should be 15 minutes.

6. With regard to records of meetings, the General Assembly had approved the recommendation of the General Committee to maintain the practice whereby the Fourth Committee received summary records but could obtain, on specific request, transcripts of the debates of some of its meetings or portions thereof. Since in the past the Committee had experienced delays in the distribution of summary records owing to the requirement of simultaneous distribution in all languages, he suggested that the Committee should consider having its meeting records made available in the language in which they were originally prepared, so as not to delay the work of the Committee, on the understanding that the versions in other languages would follow as soon as they became available.

7. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) wondered how the Secretariat decided on the priority to be given to the language versions and whether summary records of the Committee's debates were ever published in Arabic.

8. Mr. SATTAR (Secretary of the Committee) said that a team of précis-writers from one of the translation services was assigned to each meeting of the Committee, and that the record produced was then translated into the other official languages. If the Committee agreed to the proposal, it could

immediately receive a summary record produced in one of the official languages instead of waiting for it to be translated into the other official languages and distributed simultaneously. To the best of his knowledge, summary records were routinely made available to the Committee in all languages, including Arabic.

9. The CHAIRMAN emphasized that the proposal had been made on the assumption that summary records would be made available in all official languages as expeditiously as possible and that no downgrading of the importance of any official language was intended. He suggested that the Committee should adopt the proposal on an experimental basis; if the results were found to be unsatisfactory, the Committee was free to change its method of work.

10. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco), supported by Mr. AL-BADI (Qatar), said that the principle of equal treatment of all official languages was sacrosanct. If the Committee accepted the proposal, it must guard against allowing summary records to be published only in one language throughout the session.

11. The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretary had taken note of the concerns expressed. He took it that the Committee was ready to adopt the proposal.

12. It was so decided.

13. The CHAIRMAN said that the practice of not reproducing in extenso statements made in a Main Committee should be maintained for the fifty-second session.

14. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that in principle his delegation agreed with the practice, but it believed that the Committee should reserve to itself the option of deciding otherwise in certain cases.

15. The CHAIRMAN said that the Bureau would entertain the possibility of making exceptions to the practice if the need arose.

16. The General Assembly had decided that, in accordance with paragraph 17 of its decision 34/401, concluding statements would be dispensed with except for statements by presiding officers. He drew members' attention to paragraph 32 of that decision and to recommendation 3 (f) of the Group of High-Level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, regarding efforts to reduce the number of new items included in the agenda, the number of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the number of reports of the Secretary-General requested.

17. In connection with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, he drew members' attention to paragraphs 12 and 13 of General Assembly decision 34/401 and said that a target deadline of 28 November 1997 had been set for submission to the Fifth Committee of all draft resolutions with financial implications. It was imperative that draft resolutions should be submitted promptly to allow time for the required consideration of programme budget implications.

18. He drew the Committee's attention to the programme of work set out in document A/C.4/52/L.1.

19. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) inquired as to the availability of documentation on the outcome of deliberations at the Caribbean Regional Seminar to review the political, economic and social conditions in the small island Non-Self-Governing Territories, held by the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Special Committee on decolonization), and on agenda item 18 (Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples), particularly in respect of the question of Western Sahara. He suggested that the Committee should defer its consideration of that question pending the outcome of the referendum to be held in the near future.

20. The CHAIRMAN said that the representative of Morocco could make a proposal to defer consideration under the agenda item itself.

21. Mr. SATTAR (Secretary of the Committee) said that the report on the Caribbean Regional Seminar referred to by the representative of Morocco was contained in document A/AC.109/2089. Nearly all the documents relating to agenda item 18, on decolonization, were already available. Outstanding documents, including the report on the question of Western Sahara, would be issued at the earliest possible date.

22. The CHAIRMAN inquired whether the most recent developments in Western Sahara were reflected in the report.

23. Mr. SATTAR (Secretary of the Committee) said that he had not seen the report.

24. Mr. KATTI (Algeria), speaking on a point of order, said it was not appropriate to engage in a substantive discussion of the question of Western Sahara, which was still being considered by the Security Council.

25. Mr. DIAGNE (Senegal) said that the remarks by the representative of Morocco were extremely relevant to the Committee's discussion of the organization of its work. The Committee must know whether or not it would be addressing the question of Western Sahara during the current session.

26. The CHAIRMAN stressed that the meeting dealt with organizational, not substantive, questions. He asked whether Committee members wished to proceed immediately to a debate on the matter.

27. Mr. KATTI (Algeria), speaking on a point of order, said that his delegation categorically refused to discuss a question of substance.

28. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco), also speaking on a point of order, said that the representative of Algeria had not raised a point of order. Rather, he had stated a position by apparently referring to the decolonization of Western Sahara, confirming his own delegation's fears that discussion of the item might interfere with the positive developments which had taken place in Western Sahara

under the settlement plan and the outcome of the scheduled meetings of the Security Council. He wished to emphasize that his delegation's proposal was organizational, not substantive.

29. Mr. ABDULAI (Ghana) requested clarification as there was no specific item on the question of Western Sahara in the agenda and added that it was not appropriate to discuss the question during the current organizational meeting.

30. The CHAIRMAN, in response to a request from the representative of Morocco, said that informal consultations would be held on the question of Western Sahara.

31. He invited the Committee to approve, in principle, the suggestions contained in document A/C.4/52/L.1.

32. It was so decided.

33. The CHAIRMAN, noting that the General Assembly had decided that bodies and individuals having an interest in the question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) (agenda item 48) would be heard in the Committee in conjunction with the consideration of the item in the plenary Assembly, said that the Committee would be informed of any requests received under that item.

34. In connection with agenda item 85 (International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space), he suggested that, as in previous years, the Committee should establish an open-ended working group, chaired by the delegation of India, to prepare a draft resolution on the item.

35. It was so decided.

36. The CHAIRMAN said that, by approving the suggested outline of work, the Committee had decided to hold a single general debate covering agenda items 18, 90, 91, 92 and 12, and 93, thereby enabling the members to speak on all those items or any one of them at meetings dealing with that cluster of items.

37. At previous sessions, the Fourth Committee, on the recommendation of the Special Committee on decolonization had usually considered the chapter of the Special Committee's report relating to military activities in Non-Self-Governing Territories in conjunction with the item on foreign economic interests. He took it that the Committee wished to retain that procedure.

38. It was so decided.

39. The CHAIRMAN said that, in order to enable the Committee to utilize the time and resources available to it in the most efficient and effective manner, he would convene meetings of the Committee only when sufficient delegations were inscribed on the list of speakers.

40. During the fifty-first session, the Committee had lost only 12 hours owing to late starts and early endings of meetings, compared with 25 hours during the previous session; its utilization factor had been 82 per cent. With a view to maintaining that trend, meetings would begin punctually.

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS

41. The CHAIRMAN said that he had received eight communications containing requests for hearings on decolonization items relating to Guam and Western Sahara and communications from the Chief Minister of Gibraltar and the Governor of Guam, who wished to make statements on Gibraltar and Guam, respectively. He suggested that, in accordance with the usual practice, the communications should be circulated as Committee documents for consideration at the Committee's 3rd meeting.

42. It was so decided.

43. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) suggested that the Secretary of the Committee should read out the names and affiliations of the petitioners who had requested a hearing on the question of Western Sahara.

44. Mr. KATTI (Algeria), speaking on a point of order, said that, during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, the Committee had decided by a vote, that the names of petitioners should be circulated to all delegations at the same time, at the Chairman's discretion.

45. Ms. WILKINSON (Deputy Secretary of the Committee) read out the names of the petitioners who had requested a hearing on the question of Western Sahara.

OTHER MATTERS

46. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to a letter he had received from the Chairman of the Special Committee on decolonization, which was being circulated to Committee members for their information. A similar letter received by the Secretary-General had been circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under the symbol A/52/379.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.